Federal Communications Commission
Washington, DC
Ref: FCC NPRM 02-230

Dear Commissioners:
I would like to register my emphatic opposition to the proposed
"Broadcast Flag" regulation which would increase the cost and
complexity of multimedia equipment while decreasing functionality.

I am a believer in the concept of open source software, which
has enabled millions of people to collaborate in the development
and free distribution of tools, applications, and intellectual
works to the great benefit of all involved. The internet, largely
built on this model has contributed immeasurably to society and
changed the lives of all of us for the better.

It has also, along the way, aided in the promotion, distribution,
and greatly enhanced the utility of many excellent proprietary
products, e.g. Microsoft Office, while at the same time nipping
at their heels enough to keep them somewhat attentive to quality,
support, and cost issues.

None of this would have happened if the available tools were crippled
to prevent "unofficial" people from tinkering with the code and
applications in the linux, GNU and OpenBSD domains. A major attraction
of PCs and networking to young people is their limitlessness, the
fact that as long as you play by the technical rules required to move
the information, (those dictated by engineering and physics) you
can innovate to your heart's content. A lot of dedicated work is done
this way that ends up in the public domain, with all costs born by the
innovator.

Now we have an interested industry trying to poison the technical
environment by forcing us to purchase tollbooths embedded in our
equipment, which restrict what we can do with it, in the belief that
nothing would change except that we would start paying the tolls in
order to travel a route we are accustomed to travel for free.

It ain't gonna happen. A way around will be found within a couple
of months, but the market will be stifled, perhaps for years, while
the energy that might have flowed in creative efforts is diverted to
manage lawsuits, recalls, retrofits, incompatibilities, etc.

Please, please, keep the lawyers out of the equipment design. The
engineering and user community will be more than happy to stay out of
litigation.

Sincerely,

John Meagher